

TO: PROSPECTIVE OFFERORS

FROM: Sabrina Mathis
Contract Specialist

SUBJECT: RFP FNS-06-0131SAM
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What are and where can we see the existing resources, tools, and materials already developed by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)?

(ANSWER) Pages 9 and 10 of the solicitation list some web site addresses that may be of interest to you. You should also check out the Food Stamp Program (FSP) web site at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/ and the FSP Outreach web site at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/.htm.

2. Who is the separate FSP national media campaign contractor that we must coordinate efforts with?

(ANSWER) The contract for the FSP National Media Campaign has not been awarded. We anticipate that the contract will be awarded in early September 2006.

3. (a) Events can be scheduled at locations where the FSP Spanish-language TV ads are being aired. (Television concept is under development. It was focus-group tested in the spring of 2006). Can we get focus group results?

(b) Management of focus groups (in 2006) to test Spanish television concepts, slogans, and new names for the FSP. Have these focus groups been concluded and can we see the executive summary?

(ANSWER) (a)(b): The focus group report is not completed. Therefore, we cannot release the report or executive summary. In general, focus group reports are considered internal documents and are not released by FNS. However, the selected contractor will have access to these reports and any other relevant research by the agency on outreach.

4. The FSP formed a national Outreach Coalition to bring together national and local organizations working with low-income audiences. Coalition members share effective outreach strategies to educate eligible, nonparticipating, low-income Hispanic people about the benefits of the FSP. Can we get a list of the coalition members, including contact information (i.e., names, email addresses and phone numbers)?

(ANSWER) The list of coalition members can be located at:
www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/about.htm

Contact with coalition members is generally through an email distribution list. Organizations may have more than one person on the list. Therefore, if you have a specific reason as to why you must contact one of the coalition members, please let us know. We will attempt to direct you to the appropriate person.

5. In FY 2006, 17 States have approved optional outreach plans. Another eight States conduct outreach without formal plans. Can we obtain a list of these states and contact information?

(ANSWER) The following 22 States have formal outreach plans: Connecticut; New Hampshire; New York; Rhode Island; Vermont; Massachusetts; Arizona; California; Hawaii; Nevada; Oregon; Washington; Tennessee; South Carolina; Florida; Pennsylvania; Illinois; Minnesota; Ohio, Michigan; Iowa; and Montana.

The following eight States also do outreach: Georgia; Delaware; District of Columbia; Maryland; New Jersey; Virginia; Virgin Islands; West Virginia.

Contact information for State Food Stamp Agencies is available at:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contact_info/state-contacts.htm.

6. FNS awards outreach grants to public entities (with the exception of State and local food stamp offices) and private, nonprofit community and faith-based organizations to develop, implement, and study outreach strategies. Grants were offered every fiscal year since 2001 with the exception of 2003. There are approximately 16 active outreach grants at this time. The most recent outreach grant competition was announced on November 30, 2005. Can we get a list of the grant awardees and contact information?

(ANSWER) The following web site address lists outreach grantees <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/grants.htm>. Grantees that will receive Fiscal Year 2006 funding have not been announced. The grantees are expected to be announced by mid-September.

7. FNS developed two outreach tool kits (one for State/local food stamp offices and one for community/faith-based organizations.) Can we get copies?

(ANSWER) The tool kits are available on the web site and can be downloaded at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach.htm.

Printed copies of the tool kit are not available yet. We anticipate that copies will be available by late August or early September. You may email your contact information to fspoutreach@fns.usda.gov for a printed version. In your email, please specify which kit you would like to receive.

8. Focus group sessions were conducted in 2004 to review FSP outreach materials; can we get executive summaries?

(ANSWER) The 2004 focus group report is an internal document and not available.

9. Concept development of 2 Spanish paid television advertisements. One television production is expected to occur in 2006. Have they been completed and can we see them?

(ANSWER) The Spanish paid television advertisements have not yet been produced. We expect the ad to be available by late September 2006.

10. Under c, schedule of deliverables, p 21, what does the underlined sentence mean? For solicitation purposes: The plan will cover a 3-year period (base and two option years.) The plan will include opportunities for FNS to propose new activities as well as to change or eliminate proposed activities. In order to budget for time spent on this subtask, use 10 new activities and 10 changes to existing activities. If an activity is eliminated, another activity will be scheduled to replace it.

(ANSWER) Please read section c, Comprehensive Plan for Base and Two Option Years, pages 19-21. You must develop a 3-year plan that contains recommendations for activities.

The "For Solicitation Purposes Information," is a guide to help you prepare your budget for subtask c in the Cost Proposal.

The guide does not limit you on the number of new activities that you can propose in your comprehensive plan. Again, it is merely a tool to help you calculate the costs for this subtask.

As you consider costs, please keep in mind that, **if** you are awarded this contract, you will meet and discuss your ideas with FNS officials. At meetings to discuss the plan, FNS officials may suggest ideas for activities. Your staff could be asked to research information and prepare a new list of recommendations for FNS. For example, you might be asked about specific locations for certain types of activities based on your knowledge of the target population and FSP participation data.

If you reference, section d, Implementation of Activities in Hispanic Communities, pages 21 -23, you will note that FNS wants the majority of funds allocated for community activities. FNS is asking that you budget in your cost proposal for at least 24 activities in the base year.

11. What are the seven national FNS regions?

(ANSWER) FNS has 7 regional offices. For a list of regional offices and the States that they cover, go to
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/contacts/fnsro-contacts.htm>.

12. What is the Hispanic participation level in each of the seven national FNS regions and how many eligible participants (Hispanic and non-Hispanic), are in these regions?

(ANSWER) Please reference the most recent information that we have available on participation at:
www.fns.usda.gov/oane/menu/Published/FSP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2003.pdf

13. What does the underlined sentence mean? M-1, EVALUATION OF OPTION YEARS: Evaluation of option years 1 and 2. The Government will evaluate offers for award purposes by adding the total price for all three years of the campaign to the total price for the basic requirement. Evaluation of Option years 1 and 2 will not obligate the Government to issue task for these “out years”.

Answer 13: The Government will consolidate totals for all three years and examine which Offeror will provide the best value to the Government. Each year could have a different price. Page 15 of the solicitation should help you calculate costs.

14. The cover letter and form SF33 both state the RFP number as being RFP#FNS 06-131SAM, but the RFP number listed at the top of the solicitation sheets is RFP# FNS-06-012LJG19. What is the correct RFP number?

(ANSWER) If you were a recipient of the initial solicitation e-mailed on July 13, 2006, you should have also received an amendment by mail clarifying that the solicitation number is RFP FNS-06-131SAM.

15. Reference section d, Implementation of Activities in Hispanic Communities, Description of Services and Due Date, Page 21 of 47, first paragraph, last sentence: "The contractor will partner with Spanish-language media to get existing FSP radio and television public service announcements aired." How many PSAs is the contractor expected to secure on a yearly basis?

(ANSWER) There is no required number. Your technical proposal may contain information describing what your organization can do to get existing FSP PSAs aired.

16. Reference section d, Implementation of Activities in Hispanic Communities, Description of Services and Due Date, Page 23 of 47: "for solicitation purposes: The majority of funds for this contract should be allocated for community activities. At a minimum, 24 activities should occur during the base year." Are all 24 community activities considered events?

(ANSWER) The "for solicitation purposes" information was provided to assist you in preparing your Cost Proposal. Since organizations have different definitions of what is an event, we used the word activity in the solicitation. For example, activities that require considerable preparation, publicity, and coordination might be considered as events by your organization. Activities that require little time or effort might **not** be considered by your organization to be events. Your organization is being asked to conduct, at a minimum, 24 activities.

17. Reference special instructions, conditions and notices, section L-5, page 43 of 47. Can you please verify the amount of funding (ceiling amount) allocated for base year and the two option years?

(ANSWER) The ceiling is \$150,000. The remaining two years is subject to the availability of funds and the need of the Government. .

18. Submission of proposals. Should proposals being delivered by courier, FedEx, or UPS be sent to the address listed on the cover letter?

USDA/Food and Nutrition Service
Contact Management Branch, RM 228
Attn: Sabrina Mathis
3101 park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302

(ANSWER) Yes, proposals should be sent to the above address.

19. Who is the incumbent on this contract?

(ANSWER) Most of the resources needed for the Spanish Media Outreach contract are located on the FNS web site. Also, the new FSP National Media Campaign contract will be awarded prior to the award of this contract. No delays in implementing the subtasks awarded under this contract are expected.

20. Will you be able to answer any questions about the proper formatting of an offer after today?

(ANSWER) It will depend on the question.

21. Is there a benefit to a contractor being an 8-A Small Business?

(ANSWER) No.

22. What is the estimated media buying budget?

(ANSWER) Please review pages 17-24 of the solicitation for details on each of the subtasks that FNS will be purchasing. The solicitation does not contain an estimated media buying budget. The FSP National Media contractor will be handling all paid media buys.

23. What is the list of key criteria for the contractor to be awarded this contract?

(ANSWER) Every proposal submitted will be evaluated by a Technical Review Panel. The Panel will use the Technical Evaluation Criteria listed on pages 46 and 47 to score each proposal.

24. Would media relations constitute “community activities”?

(ANSWER) More details on what is meant by media relations are needed to respond to this question. If your question refers to supporting activities that feature FNS spokespersons, those could be considered community activities.

25. Does handling, coordinating, and facilitating state and local participation in Hispanic events qualify?

(ANSWER) It might. More specific information is needed on the audience and type of event.

26. When would the contract start? What time period would it cover, e.g. Oct 1, 2006 – Sept 30, 2007?

(ANSWER) The contract would start in September after award. The time period would be September 2006 through August 2007

27. Who is the contractor that will have the pre-produced TV and radio spots?

(ANSWER) The radio and television public service announcements are located on the FNS web site and can be downloaded. If there is a problem downloading the materials, FNS employees can assist you.

28. Have the flight dates for the media campaign been ascertained in advance, if not, when will they be determined?

(ANSWER) The flight dates for the radio buys have not been determined. The locations and flight dates should be determined no later than December 2006.

29. Is the ceiling for the grant \$150,000 in all three years?

(ANSWER) This is not a grant. This is a contract for a base and 2 option years. FNS may decide to purchase subtasks in the option years based on the availability of funds, needs of the FNS, and performance of the contractor.

30. How specific does the proposal need to be about the suggested locations and timelines for activities?

(ANSWER) The proposal should contain sufficient information to allow the Technical Review Panel to evaluate the information. Please review the Technical Evaluation Criteria on pages 46-47 prior to preparing your proposal.

31. How much is subject to change in working with FNS and the advertising agency handling the campaign?

(ANSWER) We will be purchasing subtasks from the new contractor. At this time, we do not anticipate many changes.

32. Activities of campaign are to enhance the National Media Campaign. How do we access it and assess its goals and intentions?

(ANSWER) The contractor selected for this award will be working with the National Media Campaign contractor. Also, your Contracting Officer's Representative will help you obtain information needed to perform your activities.

33. Since 24 activities should occur during the first year, how much time should be budgeted for required FNS review of campaign next steps?

(ANSWER) Please review pages 17-24 of the solicitation. The solicitation provides suggested due dates.

34. The National FSP Media Campaign focused on increasing program participation among eligible individuals and families. Should the campaign be working to increase the awareness of the many, many, many agencies, websites and charity organizations that are willing to help a family with children provide nutritional food? Is that correct?

(ANSWER) The focus of this effort, is to increase participation in the FSP by eligible low income Hispanic people. Many community-based agencies, websites and charity groups, such as food banks, offer community services. FNS encourages these organizations to spread the word to their clients about the nutrition benefits of food stamps and provide them with assistance in applying for benefits. However, while an important aspect of reaching potential clients is the support from such partners, devoting resources to establish such partnerships is not within scope of this contract. FNS has other programs that focus on partnerships such as food stamp outreach grants and optional state/nutrition education plans.

The FSP is administered by State and local food stamp offices. Applications for food stamp benefits are made through these local offices. The goal of this contract, is to increase participation in the FSP by establishing connections between eligible Hispanic clients and local offices in the targeted communities through the 24 planned activities. The selected contractor will work in partnership with local food stamp offices to implement activities to directly reach and educate Hispanic audiences about the requirements of the FSP, how to apply, and link them with the local food stamp office if they wish to apply.

Reference pages 9 and 10 of the solicitation for additional information on Nutrition Education, Outreach, and State Participation grants.